

## ID CRITICS IGNORED

### Data handling slammed as rollout begins

As the government brings out a new study which it says will lead the way to keeping people's personal data safe, an avalanche of criticism from rights groups, government committees and senior individuals continues to emerge.

The introduction of ID cards in particular, which are being worked on for airport staff and as a form of age proof for young people, are coming under increasing criticism as the scheme expands, following its introduction into immigration control systems.

It is claimed that the Data Sharing Review's recommendations will make the government's various databases holding personal information secure, while increasing the amount of data shared between departments.

However Information Commissioner Richard Thomas has called for the government's first priority to be reducing the amount of data held, noting that the more information is held, the more opportunity there is for losing it.

Reports including the Poynter review, into the loss of child benefit data discs, from the Independent Police Complaints Commission and the Information Advisory Council have castigated the government for its inability to

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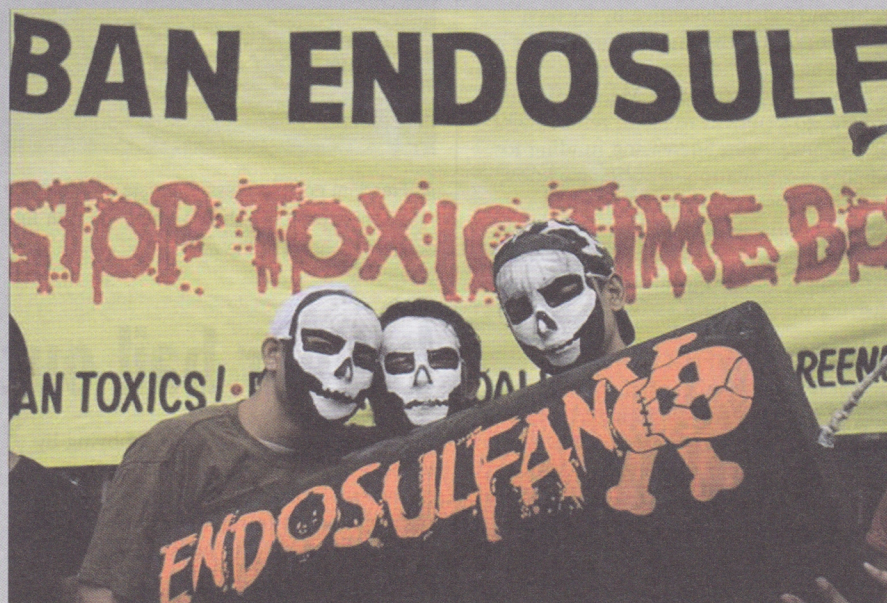
## NUJ PRESIDENT'S MAGAZINE CRACKDOWN

The president of the National Union of Journalists has become embroiled in a row over the banning and removal of a radical arts magazine from the centre of Glasgow.

James Doherty, who also acts as the media manager of Culture and Sport Glasgow, a private charity which has taken over control of culture and sport from the council, sent *Variant* magazine a letter detailing alleged inaccuracies as the magazine was pulled from cultural venues across the city.

The offending article in *Variant* dealt with a "web of business and political connections between the main players in Culture and Sport Glasgow", which Doherty was quick to attack on the grounds of inaccuracy, something *Variant* has denied in an open letter to the

### LENS CAP TOXIC TIME BOMB



Over 50 citizens' groups and coalitions protest over the continued use of the pesticide endosulfan in Quezon City, Indonesia. NGOs are campaigning for the banning of endosulfan following the capsizing of MV Princess of Stars, which was carrying the toxic chemical, just off the coast of Sibuyan Island. Endosulfan poisoning has been linked to reproductive and birth abnormalities, congenital physical disorders, mental retardation, neurological problems, cancer and death among agricultural workers and villagers in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

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## NEWS

### IN BRIEF

**ENVIRONMENT:** Britain's true contribution to global warming is much higher than official figures show, ministers admit, and it's rising rapidly. The figures revealed last week in a government report, *Development of an Embedded Carbon Emissions Indicator*, conclude Britain is responsible for 200 million more tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year than official figures, an increase of 37%. And whereas Britain has been officially reporting that its emissions have declined by 5% since 1992, the report says that the true picture reveals that instead they rose by 18%.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY:** The government is failing to act on severe criticisms of the Health and Safety Executive by its own select committee, the union representing its workers has said.

Prospect negotiator Mike Macdonald said: "For the government to again refuse point blank to investigate increasing funding for proactive investigation, a policy we know works, is at best complacent. We had hoped that ministers would heed the clear recommendations from the committee, not least because of the recent 28% rise in construction site fatalities."

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT:** Aberdeen City Council is set to hire a social work guru at a cost of £100,000, despite being £27 million in debt. The temporary post will last for six months. During that time the Yorkshire-based consultant Philip Cotterill will be flown up to Aberdeen for three days each week. The £100,000 package will include a weekly return flight from Birmingham to Aberdeen, other travel expenses, accommodation and the consultant's wages.

**NON-PROFIT:** Recent research in the non-profit sector by the Unite union has shown that 43% of members had experienced bullying in the last two years. This is well above the national average of one in ten.

**SURVEILLANCE:** Google has been ordered to hand over details of YouTube users' viewing habits by a US court.

Viacom, filed a £500 million lawsuit against the video-sharing site demanding Google, which owns YouTube, hand over data about how people use the site, arguing this would show that copyright-protected material was routinely posted.

Judge Louis Stanton has ordered Google to divulge details of every video clip uploaded to the site, along with viewers' YouTube usernames and IP addresses.

**TRANSPORT:** Tube staff were subjected to 'gangster-style intimidation' and threatened with the sack while on strike, the RMT union has claimed.

Hundreds of London Underground cleaners – who have recently finished a two-day walkout over pay and conditions – were bullied and harassed, according to the group.

### LENS CAP WEMBLEY TENT CITY



As Freedom goes to press, activists at a tent city in Wembley's sports ground have been preparing to resist an eviction, which was slated for 15th July. The occupation is in protest at the expansion of academy schools in the area.

## Labour bail out constructors

Following a period of heavy lobbying by Registered Social Landlords, Housing Minister Caroline Flint has approved the release of funds to rapidly expand on the amount of land being publicly bought for building.

The government are looking at buying land for direct investment in building housing now that the private market has failed. Social housing demand has remained high while demand for expensive homes has plummeted.

As a result, companies are now shifting work into social housing schemes, which are being regarded as a safe haven while the government remains able to pull in major loans to pay for construction.

The move comes on top of £200 million which has been made available for housing associations to buy homes from construction companies struggling in the wake of the housing slump.

Politicians have suggested that up to £2 billion might be made available to prop up the private sector, despite criticism that buying luxury housing would be a waste of public funding.

Housing minister Caroline Flint has announced the scheme as part of a package of measures designed to bail out the ailing construction industry, which overstretched itself by building large numbers of luxury homes shortly before the credit crisis kicked in.

As a result, three quarters of the major construction companies have given financial warnings in their filings in the last six months.

The Housing Corporation is to set up a 'clearing house' so housing associations can buy private sector homes from major constructors, to help keep prices stable as the downturn continues and offset a lack of interest from individual buyers.







# Jailed and abandoned

## Report shows prison shortcomings

A new report has highlighted a wide range of areas within the prison system which are contributing to continued problems for ex-cons as they leave incarceration and help increase the chances that they will end up unable to cope with the outside world upon release.

The report, *High Hopes: Supporting ex-prisoners in their lives after prison*, focuses on the treatment of prisoners in the run up to and directly after release. It suggests that in particular, resettlement support is inadequate, problems with drug addiction are not addressed, that the transition to benefits for those without work is too slow, and there is a lack of aid in finding people work when they have a criminal record.

## ID critics ignored

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keep hold of personal files. Alongside these, a Home Affairs Select Committee report has suggested that the amount of data being held on individuals should be minimised and has warned against 'function creep' – information being collected and then used for more than was originally declared.

The chief executive of the Identity and Passport Service meanwhile has admitted that the ID cards database in particular will not be completely secure. James Hall said: "You would rightly be concerned about the integrity and security of the information held about you. I won't stand in front of you and say there will never ever be a breach of information."

Anti-ID card campaigning group No2ID said: "With the publication of the Home

It said that both prison and external staff found prison a difficult environment in which to attempt the provision of such support, complaining that lack of dedicated spaces to talk in, lack of availability due to the prison regime, and activities such as lockdowns for cell searches all disrupted any attempts to work with prisoners prior to their release.

It was found that prison work schemes, which have been repeatedly attacked by prison activist groups for paying almost nothing and being aimed at profit rather than training, are not fulfilling their stated role.

The report noted: "Prison resettlement staff identified a mismatch between the types of workshops available in prisons and local skill shortages, and felt that the experience prisoners gained from working during their sentence did not increase their employability on release."

Affairs Select Committee report: *A Surveillance Society?* the ID scheme gets its third official black mark in four months. It's official: wrong in principle, shoddily built, and a threat to privacy. The ID card project must be stopped."

Airline staff are expressing their anger at the prospect of having ID cards introduced ahead of mass rollouts to the wider population, as part of a claimed 'anti-terror' initiative.

The airline pilot's union Balpa in particular has attacked the plan as amounting to little more than a political manoeuvre at their expense to introduce ID cards by stages.

Alongside airlines including British Airways, easyJet and Virgin, they said in a statement: "the UK aviation industry is

The news deals a further blow to the controversial working programmes currently being implemented in prisons, which activists discovered have been supplying prison labour at far below minimum wage, effectively using them as a way to undercut other companies. Unlike in Scotland, such work is compulsory, or privileges are cut and sanctions imposed.

Once prisoners came to their release, the transition depended heavily on the ability of offenders' friends and families to help them out, failing to provide a solid route into work or new accommodation, and in the case of drug users, offering little post-prison support.

While an initial release grant of £46.75 was offered to prisoners, it was found that in several cases the newly-released were not able to claim benefits, leaving vulnerable prisoners with little means of supporting themselves beyond their first week of freedom. In some cases, benefits payments were delayed for three months or more.

being used for political purposes on a project which has questionable public support". If the scheme has any impact at all, they say, it could reduce security by adding a "false sense of security to our processes".

Young people have also added their voices, on a government-backed website set up to canvass their views on ID cards – labelling it 'illegal' and 'creepy'. The mylifemid.org site was launched to discuss the national identity Scheme which will hold all the personal details to be included on the ID card system.

The ID card scheme will be rolled out over the next four years, starting with about 10 million 'critical' workers in 2009, young people in 2010 and the rest of the UK public in 2011–12.



## PUBLIC SECTOR

# 'Public' sector is one-third private

## And the state is looking at expanding the sell-off

An ex-CIA analyst and current non-executive director of BP has revealed in a new report that the public sector is now one-third run by private concerns – and is urging a major expansion of the system both at home and overseas.

DeAnne Julius, who also holds directorships in Lloyds TSB, Serco and Roche Holdings, found in a government-funded report that the public services industry – profit making groups operating within public sector entities such as the NHS, have grown by 130% since 1995 and now represent a £79bn industry.

It makes the UK the most outsourced country in the world per capita, with only the US spending more. The government is even evangelising other countries, including the US, by funding trips to promote the UK model abroad.

Julius has recommended that the sector be opened further to increase private sector participation in public services, saying that such an increase would significantly improve delivery.

The department for business, in line with this view, is set to unveil a plan for doing just that, via a consultation process with business which leads at the GMB have likened to “consulting with foxes as to how best to raid the hen house”.

Secretary of State for Business John Hutton said: “It is clear that private and third sector organisations play a valuable part in delivering modern public services and our substantial investment over the past ten years has paid off.”



John Hutton, Secretary of State for Business

Hutton himself is leading the charge by travelling to the US to expound the UK system, accompanied by representatives of public service businesses.

However the plan has angered public sector union groups, with the PCS noting: “It comes in the same week as the Commons public administration select committee confirmed PCS’s long-held view that there is no compelling evidence to support the government’s claim that the third sector is ‘transforming’ public services.”

The union points to the Department of Work and Pensions as a recent example, where internal research has found that in-house operations are outperforming private-sector teams in delivery, while

costing significantly less.

Unison meanwhile are warning that heavy reliance on the private sector is opening up public services to increased financial pressures and cost-cutting to maintain private profits, even as an increasing number of people in need of help raises pressure on existing resources.

The pledges of Hutton and Julius look set to give a shot in the arm to the sector, which had seen a slowing in new business to 3% over the last few years after an explosion of PFI initiatives as Tony Blair took power.

Primary care trusts, for example, have been told where they introduce a service or make big changes to existing ones, there should be a presumption the work will be tendered.

## Local government on strike

A two-day local government strike from the Unison and Unite unions is set to go ahead as *Freedom* goes to press.

Among those striking are social workers, housing benefits staff, debt collectors, dinner ladies, reaching assistants, cooks, cleaners, architects and surveyors and refuse collectors.

As the preparations for the strikes reached a climax, council and district councils have made a concerted effort to undermine the action, with Fylde council in Lancashire for example claiming that joining the strike would affect employee pensions.

The strike, over a 2.5% pay deal for this year which falls far below inflation, comes as tensions rise for NHS unionists, who are staging a series of national protests against their own three year pay deal of under 8%.

The Unite union, which is organising the protests, is also setting up a working group to discuss a possible autumn ballot as rising

food, utility and mortgage payments continue to rise.

The PCS could also bring in its own members in an attempt to coordinate their action with Unite’s, and with Unison’s members in Scotland.

The strikes, which follow a similar pattern of one-day actions to previous years, have repeatedly come under criticism for effectively being no more than political demonstrations and offering little concrete damage to public sector functioning.

Previous years have seen widespread anger, but little impact has been made on pay scales, leading many radical groups to urge either more prolonged periods out, or the employing of new tactics.

Further education UCU has recently called off its own series of one day strikes after admitting it was disappointed by a 3.2% deal, which it nevertheless boasted was the best in the public sector to date this year.

## Scottish local government ballot

Local government workers in Scotland are to be balloted for strike action over a 2.5% offer from the Scottish Parliament.

Twenty thousand workers with the Unite union are to be balloted, with the results expected at the end of this month.

The below inflation pay offer, affecting tens of thousands of workers, would confirm 2.5% of the workforce in living standards below the minimum needed for a basic standard of living, according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

The Foundation has found that a single person needs to ear £13,400 a year to afford basic standards of living, while the lowest pay grade in Scottish council work is £5.81 an hour in an average 37-hour week.

Unite has membership across all local government occupation sectors from road maintenance, school support staff and recreation to cleansing, catering and home care services.



## IN BRIEF

**CONSTRUCTION:** Barratt Developments is making around 1,000 people redundant, alongside further job losses from Persimmon, taking job losses in the construction industry to nearly over 3,400 in a week.

Total unemployment has climbed by more than 20,000 since February.

Barratt, is looking to cut about 15% of the 6,700 workforce, while Persimmon have recently announced 1,100 job losses. Galliford Try will drop 256 jobs in its housebuilding division while Ballymore, the residential and commercial developer, will cut 50 jobs – more than 10% of its workforce. Taylor Wimpey, Britain's largest housebuilder by volume, is cutting 900 jobs and closing a third of its regional offices. Other housebuilders known to be in the process of making redundancies include Bellway, Crest Nicholson and Countryside Properties.

**TAX:** Telecoms giant Vodafone has won a £2bn legal battle over tax which could see it and other companies avoid huge sums in corporation tax. The company persuaded the High Court it should not be taxed UK rates on overseas subsidiaries where taxation is lower.

**MEDIA:** Media giant Trinity Mirror has denied that its pension fund deficit could be in danger after concerns were raised at the £1.5bn pot's status relative to the company's weak financial position. The company is already being advised by analysts to spin the fund off, to avoid its future responsibilities, though it says it has no plans to do so at present.

**BANKING:** The Treasury has backed down from its threat to force banks to put money into a fund to compensate savers in the event of another Northern Rock. It also appears likely that compensation will be capped at £50,000, rather than the £100,000 originally mooted. Savers will instead get compensation immediately from the Government, which will then attempt to claw back the money by a levy on banks and the sale of the troubled bank's assets.

**TRAVEL:** As *Freedom* goes to press, talks are underway between City of Derry Airport and firefighters over a possible strike. The facility may be forced to close on 16th and 17th July if workers walk out in a dispute over pay. Unions representing firefighters, baggage handlers and cleaners have been urged by airport operators Derry City Council to exempt their members from the UK-wide strike.

**GAS:** The Dragon LNG site in Waterston has refuted claims its working conditions are unsafe after 600 employees walked out in protest. The walkout followed the sudden death on Sunday afternoon of Anthony Peter Luff, aged 43, from a suspected heart attack.

Mr Luff, who was a welding inspector on the site, and was part of the quality control team, was up scaffolding at the time.

# GSK caught price fixing

UK pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline has found itself in trouble on both sides of the Atlantic, as it has come under fire for price-fixing and conflicts of interest.

In the US, GSK, along with Novartis, have been ordered to pay £57.5 million after a jury found that the companies had been overcharging Alabama Medicaid, a health insurance programme, for prescription drugs.

Alabama Medicaid is one of the few social safety nets for those on the lowest income in the US, itself one of the poorest states in the US.

Effectively a means-tested pot of money to aid those who can't afford to pay for medical insurance, Medicaid was set up in the '60s and remains the largest organisation of its kind in the US.

Along with GSK and Novartis, 69 other drug companies have been sent letters demanding payment for similar drug-pricing scams.

GSK plans to appeal the decision.

Meanwhile in the UK a scandal has erupted over the appointment of GSK's vice-president as an advisor to school inspectorate Ofsted, after it was pointed out that GSK are heavily involved in promoting its vaccination programmes in the school system.

Paul Blackburn, who is also financial controller at GSK, was appointed to Ofsted after his company won a drive to vaccinate 12 and 13-year-olds against the STD linked to cervical cancer.

Blackburn, who was praised by the government for bringing 'private sector expertise' to the schooling of children, has now left his post, though he denies his role was a conflict of interest.

GSK has been heavily criticised by regulators for its late reporting of side-effects in its drugs, particularly anti-depressants – earlier this month it was found in the US that GSK's anti-epilepsy drug Lamictal carried a risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviour.



## Severn Water fined for lying

Regulators have confirmed that water utility giant Severn Trent Water is to be fined £35.8 million after it deliberately misreported its water leakage levels in order to drive up prices and increase profit margins.

The amount is around half what analysts suggested the cost should be for Severn, which ranged upwards of £70 million.

Severn was found to be misreporting leakages from a series of e-mails and board meeting records.

The company had already been fined £2 million directly through the Old Bailey and water regulator Ofwat is expected to demand the rest through a reduction in water bills for all customers of the company – the equivalent of a month's free water for all.

When sentencing the company, Judge Jeremy

Roberts, QC, indicated that £4 million would have been a more suitable fine but he said that he had taken into consideration the company's early plea and co-operation with the Serious Fraud Office.

The prosecution singled out three executives, Brian Duckworth, Mark Wilson and John Banyard, who have now left the company, as the main figures behind the scam.

Duckworth in particular retired as Managing Director in 2005, and now works as a non-executive director of Novera energy, as well as holding a position as sitting on the Corporate responsibility board at Redrow plc.

Tony Wray, the company's chief executive who attended the sentencing, largely blamed Severn's former management, who deny any wrong-doing, for the misreporting.



## INTERNATIONAL

### IN BRIEF

**INDIA:** Violence rocked India's diamond capital Gujarat earlier this month. At least 40,000 angry workers, who have been demanding better pay for a while, attacked small factories and homes of their owners. The security guards hit back and one person died while others were injured in the firing.

Workers are demanding a 20% raise. Currently, they are paid anywhere between 15–25 Rupees per diamond which they say is inadequate in these times of skyrocketing prices. What has made things worse is the gradual decline in the demand for diamonds.

Thousands of people at units in Gujarat cut and polish the raw materials until they are priceless jewels which are then exported to the US at huge profits. But the workers say they are paid very little and the pay structure is inconsistent.

**IRAN:** Thousands of workers at the Iran Khodro car manufacturing plant are protesting the exploitation of precarious workers and demanding better wages and conditions. What began as a hunger strike launched on 28th June has grown to a full-scale strike as thousands of workers at Iran Khodro, the country's largest auto manufacturer, walked off the job. Workers are protesting the company's use of contracts and temporary work agencies to deny workers basic labour rights and decent working conditions. Many contract and temporary employees of Iran Khodro have worked there for as long as ten years and are often forced to work overtime.

**SAUDI ARABIA:** Asian domestic workers in Saudi Arabia face routine human rights abuses that in some cases amount to slavery, with employers often escaping any punishment, according to a new report.

Abuses include months or years of unpaid wages, forced confinement and physical and sexual violence, while some workers suffer imprisonment or lashings for spurious charges of theft, adultery, or 'witchcraft', says Human Rights Watch.

Saudi households employ an estimated 1.5 million domestic workers, mostly from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Nepal. Thousands of complaints of abuse are made every year.

**VIETNAM:** On 3rd July, some 6,000 workers at a Vietnam-based plant owned by textile manufacturer the Chutex Group went on strike over pay levels. The strike, which took place in the Song Than II Industrial Zone in the southern province of Binh Duong, asked the company's management to raise basic salaries by 15%, and provide workers with accommodation and transportation costs. It was reported that the workers' current salaries are too low to cope with the country's high inflation.

The company has responded with an offer to raise salaries by 10%, but this was declined and the strike has continued.

For more, go to [libcom.org](http://libcom.org) and [infoshop.org](http://infoshop.org)

### LENS CAP NILIN DEMONSTRATIONS



Four years after the International Court of Justice published an advisory ruling against Israel's apartheid wall, without a change on the ground, the Palestinian popular resistance has intensified its actions. In Bilin in the Ramallah area, Israeli settlers and the army are expanding an illegal settlement, in contempt of a ruling by Israel's High Court from over a year ago, leaving Bilin residents to commence legal proceedings against profiting Canadian companies. Nilin village, a neighbour of Bilin, has been holding demonstrations almost daily for several weeks and this week faced a siege by Israel's army.

## Protests against Starbucks

An international day of protest against Starbucks for its anti-union activity in the US saw a response from groups across the globe. Alongside a series of demonstrations and other actions in the US, activists in Brazil, Chile, Spain, the UK, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Slovakia, Russia and Australia took part in a range of activities in solidarity.

The actions, which aim to expose low pay and attacks on workers, was sparked by the ousting of two baristas who say they have been victimised by Starbucks for their union activities in Spain and the US.

In April Monica, a barista in the central Seville branch of Starbucks, was fired without notice for creating problems with her workmates as an organiser with the anarcho-syndicalist CNT.

One month later, in Grand Rapids, Michigan,

USA, Starbucks fired barista Cole Dorsey on 6th June. Cole had over two years of service and was active in the IWW Starbucks Workers Union.

The firing followed two other sackings on similar grounds in the US, which had seen the firm forced to rehire two sacked workers in 2006 after illegally firing them.

Alongside widespread activity in the US and Spain, Germany in particular saw strong support for the initiative come from anarcho-syndicalist union the FAU, which organised pickets and information stands at 40 outlets in 16 towns across the country.

In the UK, the Solidarity Federation, linked to the CNT through the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers Association, along with IWW, picketed in London, Brighton, Bristol, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds.

## Notes from the United States

The Presidential Memorial Commission of San Francisco have been making themselves quite visible on the streets and in the parks of that California city by prominently carrying American flags wherever they go, having boom-boxes blare out patriotic music and even dressing up as Uncle Sam. Their intentions, though, are laudable.

The group has already collected 8,500 signatures (nearly 20% more than needed) to have an unusual proposal of theirs placed on the ballot in city elections in November.

It's a measure which would rename the 'Oceanside Water Pollution Control Plant' the 'George W. Bush Sewage Plant' at the time of the inauguration of whichever candidate becomes Bush's successor next January. During the inauguration, the group also wants supporters to participate in a 'synchronised flush' – a way to send a gift to the renamed sewage plant. This, supporters say, would be a "fitting monument to this president's work".



# Torture trainers outed

## Brit implicated in Mexico scandal

A scandal which erupted in Mexico over a video showing police engaged in torture training has deepened, after it was revealed Cuban terrorists, operating out of the US were the lead trainers.

The pair, identified as Andrew Wilson and Gerardo Arrechea, were linked to the US private security company Risks Incorporated, based in Florida, and to Comandos F4, an armed Cuban terrorist organisation, by journalists for Narconews.

Despite mainstream reports which failed to link the two men to their organisations or wider connections, a look into the background of the company found promotional videos and photographs showing the two men, using code names, working for the company.

Andrew Wilson, codename Orlando, appears in one of the recent Mexican torture videos dragging a León Special Tactics Group (GET in Spanish) through his own vomit during an exercise. He is also visible in a Risks Incorporated promotional video, wearing the same clothes and operating in the same terrain as in the torture scene, with León police trucks in each sequence.

While Risks Incorporated do not directly link to Wilson in their personnel section, they do list 'Orlando', whose biography matches almost exactly to Wilson's, stating he served in the British army from 1988-93, including a stint in Northern Ireland, that he worked in reconnaissance, and it carried the same photo as in an earlier biography the company had put up before they started using codenames.

Gerardo Arrechea meanwhile has a strong



**SAME CLOTHES:** 'Orlando', thought to be Andrew Wilson, shown in both a police torture training video and a promotional video for Risks Inc.



correlation with 'Jerry' (an Anglicisation of Gerardo). Arrechea was identified as a Cuban-Mexican martial arts champion and soap opera stunt man who runs the Free Fight Academy in Mexico by police. Risks Incorporated boasts of Jerry as a director or a martial arts company in Mexico City, and, like Arrechea, it says 'Jerry' has a fourth-degree black belt in Doce Pares Eskrima. Strongest of all is their shared status as both the 1996 Heavyweight Stickfighting Champion of Mexico and 1999 May Thai Association champion of Mexico.

Arrechea's past has been a controversial one. His name, and email address, is listed as a Mexico contact and board member of the anti-Castro terrorist group Comandos F4 – a band who have said to US media that they are

prepared to carry out armed attacks against the Cuban government, in order to return the country to the constitution of 1940, a reinstatement of private property to its previous owners, and the creation of a private market sector in preparation for wide-scale privatisation.

A March 2007 archive of Risks Incorporated's site also boasts a course including what the company refers to as psychological torture: "This basic interrogation demonstration is from one of our specialist counter terrorism and executive protection/bodyguard training courses. Psychological torture is the main tactic used in professional interrogations, it works and leaves no physical marks. We do this interrogation technique and others on some courses to show how easy it is to break a hostage and we're being nice!"

## Notes from the Unites States

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"It's a very simple yes or no question, and there's no real fiscal impact – just the cost of relettering the sign in front of the plant," said organiser Brian McConnell. Although those whom you would expect to be livid at the idea are spending large sums of money to counter it, support is strong: a group of residents was canvassed recently one Sunday in the park. "[Bush] has always done well for the affluent of America, and anyone that does well for the affluent should be named for the effluent," said Bright Winn, a San Francisco plumber.

The stunt does have a more serious side, as McConnell points out: "Fifty years from now in a civics class, students will learn about the Lincoln Memorial, that other presidents are on Mount Rushmore – and George W. Bush got a sewage plant. It will prompt people to ask why, and they can discuss the Iraq war, and everything that led to it."

- The Inspector General at the US Justice Department (the equivalent of the UK's Home Office) has issued a report detailing the extent to which top officials illegally rejected many applicants for jobs with them for no other reason than that they were perceived as 'liberal'.

The applications examined formed part of a recruitment drive targeted at young graduates from law schools. The trends outlined in the DoJ's own report began in 2002 when John Ashcroft was Attorney General. They became more pronounced under his successor, Alberto Gonzales.

Emails apparently reveal that applications were vetted for 'leftist commentary' or such 'buzz words' as 'environmental and social justice'. The presence of these and/or applicants' membership of groups like the American Constitution Society, Greenpeace or the Poverty and Race Research Action Council constituted grounds for rejections.

## G8 finishes

In the concluding event of ten days of the 2008 G8 protests, hundreds of activists from three protest camps marched in a demonstration organised by the Ainu, a disenfranchised indigenous population of Hokkaido, where the G8 summit is being held. The march was surrounded by several rows of police.

The G8 2008 took place in Hokkaido, Japan, from 7th to 9th July. As in past years, people from all over the world protested against the summit and the capitalist system it represents both in Japan and in many other places around the globe.

As *Freedom* goes to press, three people were being held by Japanese police. The G8 legal team have put out a call to support the three. They said: "We call on people around the world to show solidarity. Demonstrate in front of your Japanese embassies. Help fund legal support for the prisoners."



## FEATURE

# Looking at the path to anarchis

## Martin Gilbert asks — is pure materialism desirable?

People have a spiritual dimension, seen in forms of energy, separate from religion. It is as if the controlling and organising of religion has only had the effect of crushing it to advance hierarchies, power structures and the capitalist ideas that accompany them. Oppressively, religion lays upon spirituality as the state lays upon basic social organisation. I use 'spiritual' in a wide sense, denoting what can be recognised as 'strength of spirit', emotional strength or endurance. The reference is holistic: mind, body spirit in ways that have nothing to do with religion. In part, it is found in individuals and groups, as in 'community spirit'. It's an energy that can be increased, dissipated or misused, in our attempts to face oppression and create resistance. Spirituality is not measurable in psychological, or other 'scientific' terms. It's there before we do anything, in thoughts that become achievable and exists after we have gone because it lingers in memory.

Some anarchists are close to these ideas because we recognise there are powerful, interconnected layers of social structure, impeding progress towards our political goals. Gustave Landauer suggested that we are capable of "releasing the spirit that lies captive behind the State".<sup>1</sup> Years later in Paris '68, we found that "under the pavement lies the beach". But 'the beach', or alternative social processes can be viewed with creative imagination, not just in limited material terms. Mark News adds that "the future of anarchism rests in its spiritualisation, without that it is a dead duck... All creativity has to come from synthesis, a dialectic process." Instead of which News finds that too much anarchist writing takes an 'either or' position, as if everything is either one extreme or another.<sup>2</sup> 'The beach' needs to be seen with creative imagination, not just in material terms. Also,

many anarchists agree that the state organises its economics through tacit co-operation for material 'goodies'. Referring to commodification (by which so much of our lives are dominated by the material/marketable) News observes that "The repression is the illusion of complete liberation from material want ... and the belief that there is nothing beyond that value system. This World Church of Commerce is completely classless ... the redeeming power of market popularism ... always on the side of the little guy."<sup>3</sup>

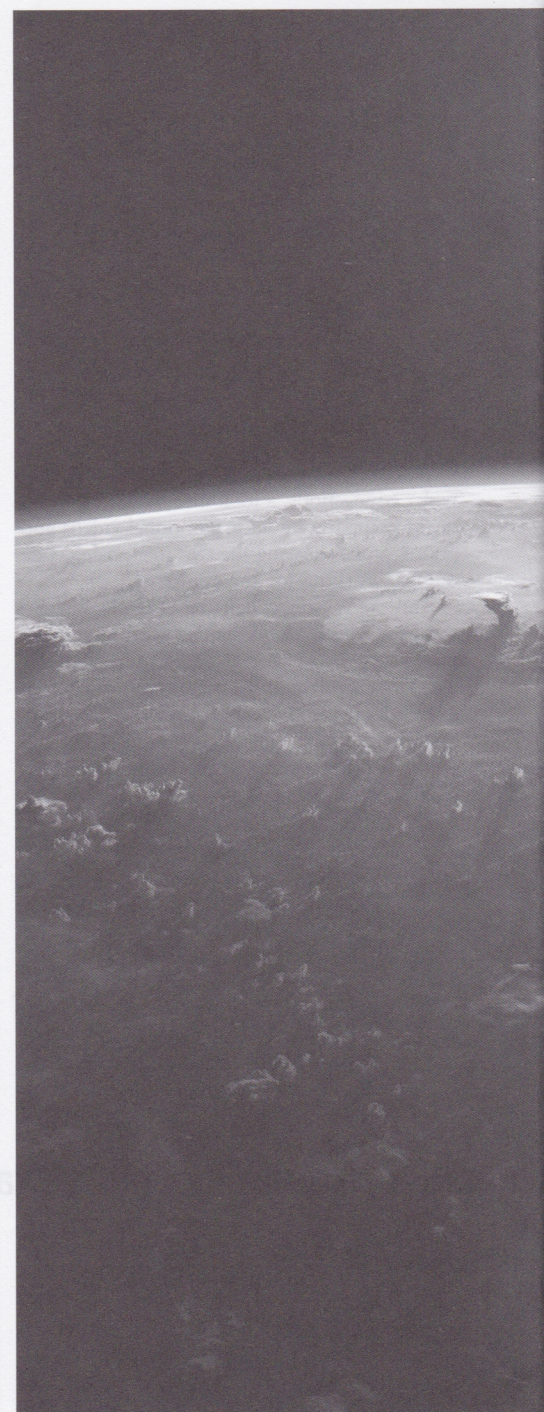
Marxists may feel vindicated by the sight of increasing numbers being excluded from such transactions, their economic reality being Equal Opportunity to share poverty. But Marx did not foresee how revolutions would be betrayed by masses of people, failing to change their personal behaviour. The addiction to authoritarianism creating Tzars and Emperors in party uniforms, appropriate to their cadres.

Under Marx's 'pavement', lay only Stalinist production figures. Critics of this essay may show some lack of imagination and compassion, for spirituality is not seen as a part of the class war. But people attach to themselves and others every kind of political/cultural label without worrying too much if it is correct. Some who claim the anarchist tag have limited or no perception of its meanings, their static, material-based thinking hinting at some authoritarianism, so antithetical to our aims. Just as there are one-dimensional people, so we have our one-dimensional anarchists.

Keith Hebden asks "Can there be such a thing as a Christian Anarchist?" to which I reply "certainly, to mix and match our belief systems reflects real life".<sup>4</sup> A criticism of the IWW was that they forgot the bosses were also human.

Purists in our ranks find it hard accept that there are aspects of religion that at times can be useful to us. For example we are capable of making our own ceremonies to mark rights of passage or just to have fun, renewing solidarity.

Opinion-forming is partly made by our idiosyncratic cultural baggage and learning from incremental experiences. Not all anarchists emerge having discarded everything from their past lives. Brian Morris notes that "in certain contexts ... there may be religions of revolt ..." Many anarchists over the centuries have adopted what he calls "a religious metaphysic" — Leo Tolstoy, Nicholas Berdyaev, Aurobindo Ghose, William Blake and Tom Paine for examples.<sup>5</sup> "[L]andlordism, and wage labour should be abolished said Gerard Winstanley of the seventeenth century Diggers.<sup>6</sup> No ideological blue print bound all the competing radical trends of that time but in varying degrees they believed in rejection of hierarchies, monarchical and church power



and in favour of co-operative action; what Kropotkin two-and-a-half centuries later called 'mutual aid'.

Potentially, the energy I write of, and its spiritual core can help to resolve conflicts by goodwill arising from strength of spirit. The opposite of this is seen in the vicious circle of despair fuelling terrorism, provoking counter military responses. James Redfield's *The Celestine Prophecy* points to this energy, suggesting how it can be used for political challenges; outside the context of conventional religion but his other work





# m through a more spiritual lens



drifted into deep mysticism.<sup>7</sup>

For thousands of years, there has been opposition to the state and its agents, by people who included a spiritual dimension in their resistance to authority: to the above list we can add Lao Tsu, in ancient China, the Cathars in the medieval Basque country. They all made mistakes but are we looking for perfect blueprints?

The early work of Ghandi and Martin Luther King also trod that road, even if they were posthumously co-opted as stateist icons. Conflicts and contradictions will be noted in

the histories of those mentioned above – we are all fallible but able to work at times with a degree of compromise.

Parallel with the development of radical 1960s and '70s politics, the 'New Age' movement shed as much light as murk. From the Atlantis industry, to the blind alley of drug induced hedonism, the search for unadorned spirituality continued to be frustrated. But some, from various religions, looking for non-authoritarian politics were drawn to anarchism, while some convinced anarchists began to look at spiritual ideas.

Further work will give more detail about this 'two way traffic'.

It exists, has been of value to us in the past, and is essential to our future. That traffic in no way relegates the struggle between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' – in what is termed 'class war'. Rather, it expands that struggle, encouraging a holistic approach. In other words, because we are looking at people and situations from all sides, we are more able to encourage them to see themselves in new ways.

Hidden talents and abilities lie under the marginalising rubbish the state dumps on people to shape them to its needs. Enquiries into spirituality offer perspectives that have been ignored too long, food for inspiration and imagination, which shows itself so lacking in what little remains of our movement. We need to ask: what is the cohesion that unites us beyond the material concerns of workplace and community struggle? One of its elements, I suggest is spirituality. As we become more aware of what those other elements are, (a mix of emotional and material things) and what they mean to us personally, we will be better equipped to convey to others our values and visions.

I plead for more self-awareness, and the ways we need to use other social skills. Collectively, we would be developing consciousness of our ability to shift social inertia. But until we can show more coherence of thought, significant numbers will continue to fail to show a sustained, active interest in anarchism. They need to feel that we are seeing them as individuals, aware of their strengths and failings, not as potential converts to an ideology. But that implied sensitivity stems from awareness of one's own strengths and failings.

It begins from honest self-criticism, and leads to towards holistic insights, of individuals, groups and situations. We do not need sterile ideas about anarchism or ourselves, confined to one-dimensional ideas about the world and how we are going to change it. Struggles for materials are aided by spiritual energy.

## Footnotes

1 *Anarchy* 54, on Martin Buber, Gustav Landauer, Eric Mühsam, Volume 5, 1965, page 247.

2 Mark Newns, *Anarchism, Spirituality and Commodification*, essay, with ideas from his PhD thesis, 2002

3 *ibid.*, *The McDonaldization of Anarchism*, 2003.

4 Keith Hebden, (title as quoted) in *Total Liberty*, Vol. 5, #3, Autumn-Winter '06, 47 High Street, Belper, Derby, DE56 1GF, UK

5 Brian Morris, in *Total Liberty* Vol.5, #4 Spring-Summer '07

6 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside down*, Penguin Books, 1991/

7 James Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy*, Bantam Books, 1994.



## COMMENT

## ABOUT FREEDOM

## ANGEL ALLEY

With the various planned changes to the Freedom building setup, a lot of things have been moved about – books, furniture, equipment, and about 100 years' worth of archived copies of *Freedom*.

Most of them are actually in pretty good nick, having been securely wrapped up, and we have full sets for pretty much every year going all the way back to the Second World War – and a large number from the years before that.

Frankly it's been quite fortunate that they've survived so well, given we aren't the most conscientious bunch when it comes to keeping the dust off.

However, this may be about to change. Looking at the archive, and at the size of the space we have to play with, it might just be possible to pull out full sets of each issue, preserve them properly for anarchist historians, and have a fair number left over, both as spares and maybe even to give away.

It's going to be a bit of a labour of love though, so if anyone fancies getting their hands on this fascinating archive to create something quite special for future generations to enjoy, get in touch!

Rob Ray

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Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

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## NEXT ISSUE

The next issue will be dated 7th June 2008 and the last day to get copy to us for that issue will be Thursday 29th May. You can send your articles to us by email to [copy@freedompress.org.uk](mailto:copy@freedompress.org.uk) or by post addressed to The Editors, Freedom, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

## A sideways look

by SVARTFROSK

One of the definitions of a state is that it claims a monopoly on violence. This means that any violence not authorised by the state is criminalised. As any gangster film will show, only one protection racket can operate in any given area.

To keep itself legitimate, the state tries to control violence amongst the population. It is currently proving particularly inept at this, with four murders in London alone on one day last week. Clearly there is more to the current wave of crime than the police's inability to prevent it. One thing that can be said, though, is that for some, and not just teenagers, carrying knives is common.

A teenager killed in south London recently was known to some of my work colleagues, who described him as a nice polite boy. His parents thought he wasn't the sort to get into trouble either, but once he'd died, bleeding to death in the arms of strangers, calling for his mum, pictures of him posing with knives were found on the internet. In addition, his mates were all vowing revenge on those who'd killed him.

When I was a teenager, I knew kids who carried knives, but they were sheath knives and were there for show. No one would have used them for anything more sinister than whittling a tent peg. The rivalry between kids from different postcodes is now such that they think they have to be tooled up to go somewhere outside their postal district. The worrying thing is the apparent readiness to use knives.

If there's a danger of getting injured, you

can see why people leave dealing with bother in their areas to professionals, as the police are trained to deal with violent situations and have the equipment needed. It becomes a much bigger deal to stand up to everyday bad behaviour, what I would have called anti-social behaviour until that term was hijacked by the government, if you think you might be stabbed rather than punched. I'm not happy with the police fulfilling a real need unmet elsewhere, but until we start seeing a bit more social solidarity it's a necessary evil.

Many vulnerable people are scared of crime to the point that it affects their day to day lives. This fear may not be based on a rational view of how likely they are to be a victim of violent crime, but it doesn't make the fear any less real. The government's anti-social behaviour agenda has fanned this fear. But the government defines anti-social behaviour in one way, and uses it as something to unite the majority around its own agenda. A lot of what is meant by anti-social behaviour is just disputes over space, between teenagers and those older.

Ideally, we should look to collectively challenge bad behaviour, as has been done on some estates, such as Oxford's Blackbird Leys, organised by the IWCA. But this is becoming harder rather than easier, and people end up putting more faith in the police, even while the police fail to make any difference. The general response now seems to be to call for ever more power to the state, rather than question its legitimacy.

## Blog Bites

(from [stroppyblog.blogspot.com](http://stroppyblog.blogspot.com))

My son Joe had an accident at school. Being chased round the playground, he tripped and fell, his shoulder and mouth hitting the side of a concrete bench. His front right tooth was bent back what looked like about 30 degrees, slightly fracturing his upper jaw.

Joe is six. The tooth is an adult tooth, less than a year old.

Having fetched him from school, we phoned our dental surgery. No, there is no dentist to see Joe. We should go to the emergency dental clinic at the Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel, in the evening. So I took Joe.

We arrived at 6pm for a clinic that opened at 7pm, and there were already half a dozen people queuing outside. By 7pm, there were maybe 40. But there was only one dentist on duty, so only the first ten got in, everyone else sent home with a phone number to ring. I got one of those ten tickets.

We got priority to see the dentist, and Joe made him check his toy dinosaurs' teeth before he would get in the chair – which would all have been very amusing were it not for what happened next. Joe needed the tooth straightening – an agonising procedure – but the clinic had no sedative for children.

They tried to do it on injections only, and

Joe did his best and bravest to tolerate it, but he couldn't, and after several efforts, the treatment was abandoned and we went home with instructions to attend the dental hospital at eight the next morning.

So my partner took Joe at 7am. He eventually saw the dentist at around 11.30am, about 25 hours after the accident. Her assessment? "The first 24 hours are crucial."

It seems that had Joe gotten proper dental care within those crucial 24 hours, they could have sedated him, straightened the tooth and very probably saved it. As it is, the tooth has been partially straightened, but we will not know whether it will survive for several weeks, even months. He could lose a permanent front tooth, and have a hole in the smile on his beautiful face until they can make him a false as an adult. Even if the tooth survives, Joe faces months and years of treatment.

He has been off school since, developed an infection, had to go back to hospital and is now on antibiotics as well as painkillers. He will need regular follow-ups thereafter.

And all because the 'Labour' government would rather see any additional money it puts into the NHS siphoned off by privateers rather than go into patient care. It makes me sick.



## Bakuninophilia

Rob Ray (2nd February) with his "nearly three and a half year of experience" tells me off like a teacher reprimanding a naughty school boy for not following the rules. His chastisement is longer than my comment! However, unrepentant I still do not think his views (those of *Freedom*) come to grips with anarchism.

In practice anarchism is about people and not an ideology. The concept is simple but people are complex and this is why I want on knowing who I am talking to. I object to anomalous organisations whether they are the State or *Freedom*.

I wish to look my opponents in the eye and for them to be accountable, as I attempt to be, for their beliefs. I wish to see the articles in *Freedom* attributed to real people. I want to know who make up the 'Freedom Press collective', to which Ray refers. I wish them to stand up to be counted. (An older generation of anarchists would recite, Dare to be a Daniel, Dare to stand alone, Dare have a purpose firm and dare to make it known.)

I referred to Bakunophilia which Rob (who is not really Rob) defends. It would be better described as Baffoonophilia. The image of Bakunin which anarchists promote so vigorously is ridiculous. He believed in a secrete dictatorship (which would "seize power, overthrow the State and instigate anarchism" – don't they all!). I 'forgive' him because he was an enthusiastic if ineffectual revolutionary. He had a combination of fallibility and conviction: he was human. The ridiculous antics of politicians make them human as well. They lie and cheat because that is what we all do. People too easily confuse ideologies with behaviour. Politician would switch to anarchism if they thought this would benefit them. Anarchism, for me, is the admittedly difficult acceptance of the individual in us. If we could come to terms with that and we have anarchism.

I want anarchists to be proud to declare their beliefs and not hide behind anonymity. If they are frighten of what their family, friends or employers think of them (as Rob appears to be) then they should stick with the establishment.

Peter Gibson

**Editor's note:** Peter, if you are going to try and go through a separate editor to get yourself published (when I had not barred you from putting forward your opinion, I might add) you have no right to chastise me about openness and honesty.

I noted that I had been forthright with my views for that long under one name, I never said that amounted to being experienced – though if you think the amount of time I've spent involved with the paper has any bearing on my right to say you are wrong you're spouting a bizarre vision of anarchism to say the least.

Simply because you feel it's fine to sling your name around does not mean everyone else must be so cavalier in their attitude as well.

If you are intent on getting yourself tracked by hostile elements unnecessarily that is your own lookout. I'm not going to insist that other

people do the same, it doesn't add to their testimony (unless you plan to meet each and every writer one by one?) and everyone has their own reasons for wishing anonymity.

We had a piece by 'Postman Pat' a few issues back about the postal workers' strike. That person would have absolutely sure and certain lost their job if some manager had spotted their real name, and for what, so that you could 'look them in the eye' without ever meeting them or knowing anything about them? What is more important, hearing their voice unadulterated or you having a meaningless moniker to add to your collection?

Finally, please show me the evidence that *Freedom* is giving any undue weight to Bakunin in these pages. I would be interested to see it. If you can't, then stop accusing us of it.

Rob Ray

## No society

The End Note to my comment about the dates for Kropotkin by Jones (2nd March) misses the point. I am pushing the belief that anarchy would benefit from appreciating the significance of the individual much as Stirner did. Anarchists have been seduced by State propaganda which says society, the status quo, must be supported at all costs (see Philpott in the same issue). The State is based on the idea that society is controlled by thinking people.

Anarchists also believe this and they claim, as the State does, to have a monopoly over reason. If other people came around to thinking like anarchists the world would be put to rights. The error is that capitalists are no more stupid than the rest of us. They are not misguided. Most people see that their interests are best served by the State. The problem for anarchists is that they cannot demonstrate that anarchism would give other people, however exploited and down trodden, more than they have got.

Anarchists do not offer anything. They carp and point out the failure of the State, which is obvious to most of us. The anarchist

argument is the same as that of the State. That is, thinking people determine the future. Choosing to vote or not is seen by capitalists and anarchists alike as an expression of free will – thought.

Capitalists and anarchists are wrong in believing that our lives depend on rational thought. Fortunately our behaviour is not determined by reason. To suggest it is self interested propaganda. We are controlled by self interest. Most anarchists cannot get their heads around the idea that we are driven not by intellect but by biology. Come to grips with that and anarchists could offer an alternative to the State. Anarchists currently offer is more of the same: control through supposed reason. They cannot open their minds to a real alternative because they think as capitalists.

Peter Gibson

**Editor's note:** Peter it's getting very boring being told – amidst a variety of childish little insults – what I and all other anarchists think all the time by one person who appears to be blissfully unaware that in attempting to preach a definitive gospel of 'nature over nurture' they are doing precisely what they accuse others of. What's more, you seem to be finding it very difficult to understand the basic fact that mutual aid is in our own self-interest, let alone taking the point that sometimes individual selfishness is not sufficient to explain all behaviour – which was the point I was trying to make.

No-one is dismissing the importance of bearing in mind individual needs and the drive to meet them in the construction of a new world. However given that we have countless billions thrown into the promotion of individualism by the state and its allies every single day, with the merits of collective activity receding ever further into the distance as only the ruling class wish to retain its benefits, do you not think it is a slightly more sensible line for *Freedom* to take to emphasise collectivism rather than jumping on that particular Thatcherite bandwagon?

Rob Ray

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## GETTING ACTIVE

### PRISON NEWS

Black Panther requests support  
Herman Bell is requesting your support when he goes before the New York state parole board this summer.

A US political prisoner and a former Black Panther, Herman was part of the liberation movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, and as such was targeted by the government for 'neutralization' via their infamous and illegal counter-intelligence ('COINTELPRO') programme.

His first trial ended in a hung jury. The second time, the prosecution used illegal tactics (including making a secret deal to drop charges against one witness in exchange for her testimony, and calling a witness who had been previously tortured by law enforcement who later admitted to lying on the stand) to obtain a conviction of Herman and his co-defendants Jalil Muntaqim and Nuh Washington (now deceased) for killing two New York City police in 1971.

Herman, Jalil, and Nuh are known as the New York Three (NY3). Now, after nearly 35 years of imprisonment, Herman faces new charges. In spite of suffering decades of removal from society, Herman has been deemed an imminent threat, evidenced by the government's prosecution of Herman and seven other Elder Black activists and former Panthers for a police killing that took place nearly 40 years ago in San Francisco.

Herman, his NY3 co-defendant Jalil Muntaqim, and their six co-defendants are known as the San Francisco 8, or SF8. Supporters wrote: "The Black liberation movement, the Puerto Rican independence movement, and environmentalists are all in the government's sites. The government is not just targeting a handful of individuals, they are threatening any movement to resist tyranny and stand up for a healthy society."

Should Herman be paroled in New York this summer, he will be returned to San Francisco to face the preliminary hearing in the SF8 case, now set for early September. He will have an opportunity to make bail, rejoin his family and friends in the community, and will be in a better position to work to defeat this vengeful prosecution.

Letters of support should be addressed to 'To Whom It May Concern' or 'Dear Parole Commissioner'. Please use the Re: line of 'Herman Bell, 79C-0262'. Please also send your letter to Herman's son:

- Kamel Jacot-Bell, Ankh Marketing, 2nd Floor, 179 11th Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, fax: (415) 865-0376 or email [jacotbell@gmail.com](mailto:jacotbell@gmail.com)

#### McDavid moved

Eric McDavid was recently sentenced to a prison sentence of just under 20 years for planning to carry out an ELF action. His new address is:

- McDavid, Eric x-2972521 7E113, Sacramento County Main Jail, 651 'I' Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



● Activists at the Mill Road autonomous centre in Cambridge (pictured above) are asking for people to come to Cambridge to talk about the campaigns that they're involved in, including anything on autonomous spaces, climate change, or any political activities they want to publicise.

A member of the organising collective said: "We badly need help with creating a more political identity as we're just a few people running this space, and at the moment, although we're putting on plenty of events, only a few of them are political."

The squatted building was attacked last month, as it is at the site of a controversial new Tesco project, but the collective are determined to keep hold of it.

See [millroadsocialcentre.wordpress.com](http://millroadsocialcentre.wordpress.com)

● Two new groups of the Anarchist Federation (AF) have just launched in East Anglia, one in Cambridge and another in Norwich.

A member of the group said: "Currently we are putting together a series of flyers/leaflets on the basics of an anarchist-communism and what the AF is about, which shall be free. A new bulletin for the area is also high on our priority list. Regular meetings are being held by the Cambridge section.

"Anyone who is interested joining and helping out with either of these groups can contact us at either our myspace or through the AF email letting us know which group you're closer to."

The federation is founded on the principle of anarcho-communism, which works towards securing a greater share of world resources

for the working class, and aims to eventually abolish capitalism altogether, replacing it with a system of freely federated entities which work together for the common good. See [myspace.com/eastangliaaf](http://myspace.com/eastangliaaf)  
Contact [info@afed.org.uk](mailto:info@afed.org.uk)

● Miners activist and syndicalist Dave Douglass is calling for a rethink by climate change activists of opposition to Clean Coal technology. Alongside a debate which is scheduled to take place at this year's climate camp, Douglass is arguing for a counter-demonstration from miners, calling for Clean Coal Technology, workers control of the mining and energy industry, in defence of the National Union of Miners and energy unions.

The Climate camp, which starts on 4th August, is scheduled to take place near Kingsnorth power Station in Kent, as part of a chain of eight camps worldwide protesting the use of coal in power generation.

● A group of local trade unions and community groups fighting against plans to privatise local services have confronted the Labour-run Council. Under the banner of 'Save Our Services in Lambeth', the group packed the public gallery at Lambeth Town Hall and quizzed the Cabinet Members responsible for widespread cuts and privatisation.

Save Our Services are opposed to the establishment of privately funded academies, cuts to service provision at Lambeth College, and the planned privatisation of housing services – including the Borough's award winning call centre.



# Erich Mühsam

**A short biography of Erich Mühsam, German poet, playwright, bohemian and anarchist revolutionary.**

**A** prolific poet, dramatist and a Bohemian intellectual, Erich Mühsam emerged at the end of the First World War as one of the leading agitators for a federated Bavarian Soviet Republic. He achieved international prominence during the years of the Weimar Republic (1919–1933) for works which satirised Adolf Hitler and condemned Nazism before Hitler came to power in 1933.

Born into a middle class Jewish family in Berlin in 1878, Mühsam spent his childhood in the northern German city of Lübeck, where his father worked as a pharmacist. The young Erich hated the school where he was sent, which was known for its authoritarian discipline and its unsparing use of corporal punishment. His rebellious nature often clashed with the school regime, and he was a frequent victim of “the unspeakable flailings which were supposed to beat out of me all my innate feelings”. In 1896 he penned an anonymous piece for the socialist paper *Luebecker Volksboten* denouncing one of the school’s most brutal teachers. This caused a scandal, and Erich was expelled for participating in socialist activities.

From a young age, Erich had had aspirations of being a writer and poet, and in 1900 he left Lübeck to pursue these ambitions in Berlin. He became involved in a bohemian group called *Neue Gemeinschaft* (New Community) which combined socialist ideology with experiments in communal living. Here he met Gustav Landauer, who introduced him to anarchist communist ideas.

Mühsam contributed to *Kampf*, the anarchist paper of his friend Senna Hoy, and in 1904 he travelled to Ascona in Italian Switzerland to live in the artists’ colony of Monte Verita, home at various times to writer Herman Hesse, dance theorist Laban, psychotherapist Otto Gross and many Dadaists and Expressionists. There he began writing plays, the first of which, *The Con Men*, mixed new political theory with traditional dramatic forms. He also continued contributing to many anarchist papers, for which he gained the attention of the German authorities. He came to be considered one of the most dangerous anarchist agitators.

Mühsam moved to Munich in 1908 and took part in the cabaret movement there. He did not care much for writing cabaret songs, but he achieved a great deal of attention because of them. In 1911 he founded the paper *Kain* which advocated anarchist communism. In it, he castigated and ridiculed the German



state, fighting capital punishment and theatre censorship and prophetically analysing international affairs. The World War that he had predicted led to the suspension of *Kain*.

Mühsam initially publicly supported the war, but by the end of 1914 he’d been persuaded that he had been wrong. “I will probably have to bear the sin of betraying my ideals” he wrote, “for the rest of my life”. Thereafter he threw himself into anti-war activity. He supported the strikes that were beginning to break out, and, as these became more widespread and began to take on a revolutionary nature, he was among those arrested and imprisoned in April 1918.

He was released in November that year, and, with the fall of the Kaiser and King Ludwig of Bavaria, and revolt breaking out in Munich, Mühsam and Landauer, as well as Ret Marut (later known as the novelist B. Traven), were among those agitating for the setting up of Workers’ Councils which led to the founding of the Bavarian Council Republic.

Terrified by the prospect of revolution, the Social Democrats allied themselves with the right and sent the Freikorps, a reactionary militia composed of right wing military and students, into Munich to quell the insurrection. Landauer was arrested and later murdered in Stadelheim prison, but Mühsam escaped, later to be captured and sentenced to 15 years’ imprisonment.

During his incarceration, Erich continued with his writing, composing numerous poems and the play *Judas*. Released in the amnesty of 1924, he returned to a Munich in the grip

of apathy. He joined the Anarchist Communist Federation of Germany (FKAD), and restarted *Kain* but this failed after a few issues. He then brought out *Fanal* (The Torch), in which he attacked both the Communists and the far right. His openly revolutionary tone and his attempts to stop the rise of the right made him a hate-figure among conservatives and Nazis.

He used satire to ridicule the Nazis with short stories and poems, and this came to the personal attention of Hitler and Goebbels, arousing their anger. He agitated for the freeing of the revolutionary Max Hoelz and, in 1928, wrote a play, *Staatsraeson* (For Reasons of State) in defence of Sacco and Vanzetti. Two years later he completed his last play *Alle Wetter* (All Hang), which called for mass revolution to stop the seizure of power by the radical Right.

A few hours after the Reichstag went up in flames in February 1933, Mühsam was arrested. He spent the last 17 months of his life in the concentration camps of Sonnenburg, Brandenburg and Oranienburg. Despite the tortures that were inflicted on him, he remained intransigent to the end: “thanks to his willpower” wrote Augustin Souchy, “he resisted all attempts to humiliate him”. On the night of 9th July 1934, however, after being tortured and beaten unconscious, he was murdered by a lethal injection from a Stormtrooper leader. His body was taken to a latrine and hung from a rafter to create the impression of suicide.

Text from the AF’s magazine, *Organise!*



## REVIEWS

## WHAT'S ON

## JULY

20th Sumac Garden Party to raise funds for Eastside Climate Action at the Sumac Centre, 245 Gladstone Street, Nottingham NG7 6HX, for details see [veggies.org.uk/event.php?ref=1337](http://veggies.org.uk/event.php?ref=1337)

21st Screening of the film they tried to ban, *On The Verge*, at 7pm at the Pullens Centre, 184 Crampton Street, London SE17 3AE

21st Projections at Pogo showing *Land and Freedom* at 7.30pm, Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, Hackney, London E5 8HB, see [pogocafe.co.uk](http://pogocafe.co.uk) or call 020 8533 1214

29th Amnesty International book sale in the Brockway Room from 11am until 7pm, plus SPES book sale in the Bertrand Russell Room from 11am until 4.30pm, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, see [conwayhall.org.uk](http://conwayhall.org.uk) for details.

31st to 3rd August Anarchopride, an anarchist queer gathering with workshops, discussions, parade and party in Cyklopen, Stockholm, Sweden, see [kulturkampanjen.se](http://kulturkampanjen.se) or [anarchopride.kamplust.se](http://anarchopride.kamplust.se) for more

## AUGUST

4th to 11th Climate Camp at e.on's proposed new Kingsnorth coal fired power station near Rochester, Kent, with day of action against agrofuels on Wednesday 6th and a day of mass action on Saturday 9th August, see [climatecamp.org.uk](http://climatecamp.org.uk)

7th to 10th Northern Green Gathering, somewhere in North Yorkshire, for more see [ngonline.org.uk](http://ngonline.org.uk)

11th When Jeff 'Free' Luers was sentenced to 22 years 8 months, it was clear that the judge was basing his decision on Jeff's politics and not the crime, watch 22/8: *The Jeffrey Luers Story* at 7.30pm, Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, Hackney, London E5 8HB, see [pogocafe.co.uk](http://pogocafe.co.uk) or call 020 8533 1214

13th to 18th Earth First! Summer Gathering, those involved (or who want to be) in radical ecological direct action get together for five days to talk, walk, share skills, learn, play, rant, find out what's going on, what's next, live outside, strategise, hang out, incite, laugh and conspire, see [earthfirstgathering.org.uk](http://earthfirstgathering.org.uk)

16th Anti-fascist mobilisation, Shut Down the BNP's 'Red White & Blue' Festival in Derbyshire, see [antifa.org.uk](http://antifa.org.uk) for more.

18th Projections at Pogo showing *Afro-Punk*, a documentary exploring race identity in the punk scene, at 7.30pm, Pogo Café, 76 Clarence Road, Hackney, London E5 8HB, see [pogocafe.co.uk](http://pogocafe.co.uk) or call 020 8533 1214 for details.

20th to 27th People's Global Action Gathering, a range of events in Athens, Greece, for more see [www.agp.org](http://www.agp.org) or [http://europe.pgaconference.org/en/greece\\_08](http://europe.pgaconference.org/en/greece_08)

21st to 24th International Animal Rights Gathering, a time to get together and talk, to socialise and build up networks, to be held south of Vienna, Austria, at the foot of the massive Schneeberg mountain, see [ar2008.info](http://ar2008.info)

## BOOKS

## The Ghost

by Robert Harris, published by Hutchinson, paperback, £7.99

This bestselling novelist's latest interrupts his blockbusting broad-brush historical revisionism, from *Fatherland* (1993; what if Germany had won WWII?) through *Imperium* (2006; ancient Roman skullduggery). *The Ghost* is contemporary; considerably less 'thrilling'; and narrower in scope, following a world-weary ghostwriter for recently-retired UK Prime Minister Adam Lang to a posh New England resort to hack together hagiographic memoirs. Harris does, however, persist in fictionalising pivotal periods in terms of corruption, conspiracy and complicity among the Great and Good hitherto hidden from mainstream accounts meekly swallowing their platitudinous rationalisations. Here there's also the obvious hook of Blair's 'legacy' and a spate of superficial political autobiographies trading on present difficulties – although, of course, any resemblance to this novel's characters is purely coincidental ...

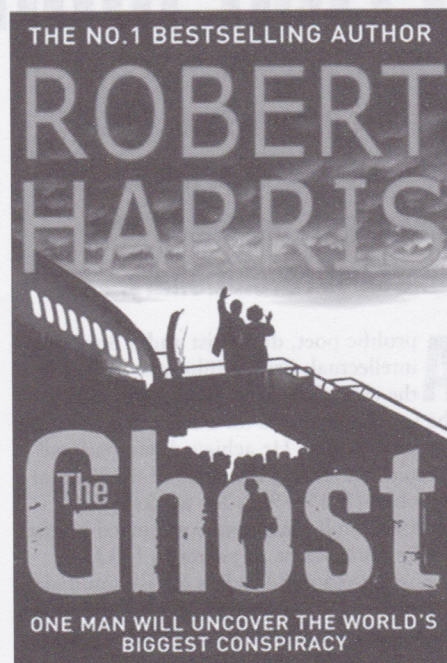
The portrayal of the rapid narcissism of power is decidedly deliberate, nonetheless, as is the murderous conjuncture of corporate unaccountability, elite greed, institutional arrogance and cynical media dishonesty. So the protagonist appropriately proposes to 'put some heart' into his spin; whereupon he's hard-pressed to find any. Skeletons and closets, conversely, proliferate. Not only did the ghost's predecessor expire in suspicious circumstances, but government support for Bush involved a whole swathe of betrayals – personal, ideological, national – stretching back decades. Maintaining their secrecy threatens our hero too, and the enjoyably daft romp accelerates after he gets a shag with Cherie (sorry, Ruth Lang) and support from a dashing, charismatic ex-Foreign Secretary (who could that be?) clamouring to nobble his former boss as International War Criminal. Finally the dastardly CIA plot is revealed (and covered up) – New Labour was a dirty trick all along.

## A Groupie's Revenge...

Or, if not that, an exceedingly big bad apple infecting an otherwise noble enterprise. But wait! Wasn't the writer cheerleader-in-chief embedded in the Third Way offensive? The Sunday Times political journo by Blair's side during that heady 1997 election night? Who got in a strop when his chum Mandelson

## QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Reagan. They all received Honorary Knighthoods. Only Reagan has not has his rescinded (Mussolini got his in 1923, it wasn't rescinded until 1940!)
2. Belgium. It took 196 days from the elections held on 10th June to the government being formed. The State, however, kept on running.



sunk (oh yes, and over the Iraq invasion)? Methinks something's rotten in the isle of Harris, too – strong whiffs of bad faith permeating this extraordinary rendition of chattering-class tabloid malice; its solipsistic tone of action unravelling inside spiteful fantasies; the vanity of self-justifying hindsight paralleling the delusions of paranoia, where the world really is out to get you but not for the reasons your hubris assumes. Beneath the manifest content, the real conspiracy is neoliberal capitalism's continuity since Thatcher, nurtured and hawked by lickspittle think-tanks and academics pimping economic sophistry to highest bidders both sides of the pond. Labour 'modernisers' partook of this poisoned font from the get-go,\* learning the codependence of business prosperity on authoritarian states and the art of selling voters out – whereas evil spooks absolve both professional suckers and the entire discursive architecture which insists 'there is no alternative'.

[www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.tomjennings.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

\* See meticulous research by *Lobster* editor Robin Ramsay published, for example, in *Variant* magazine and books including *Prawn Cocktail Party* (Vision, 1998), *The Rise of New Labour* (Pocket Essentials, 2002), and new collection *Politics and Paranoia* (Picnic, 2008).

3. The drive towards biofuels in the US and EU.
4. The FIFA Wild Cup, organised by the 'Federation of International Football Independents', for places not recognised by FIFA. Also in the tournament were the German team St Pauli, Greenland, Gibraltar and Tibet.



# Solidarity and DIY cinema

Ipswich Borough Council has hosted a film theatre in the town's Corn Exchange since 1975. It specialised in showing alternative, foreign, independent and low-budget film, offered concessionary rates for benefit claimants and was well-used by the local college and societies.

The Ipswich anarchist group put on a live performance of *SchNews at Ten* there for Mayday 2005, we all saw *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* and *Land and Freedom* together there; it was an integral facet of the town's public educational facility.

In spite of this the business was sold off to a private company, Hollywood Cinemas, last year. Because, of course, it wasn't financially viable. They're only a small firm, owning little cinemas in little places across East Anglia.

However, since the takeover, I've only been to perhaps two films ... simply because nothing they screen is worth seeing. There are mainstream flicks I could catch at the Cineworld multiplex, some mildly-but-not-compellingly interesting less-mainstream films shown way after their release date, whilst the obscure or possibly contentious films – and any with political or socially challenging content – have been removed from the programme.

I've found myself in cities in other parts of the country jealously fingering local film house literature, devouring the reviews, hungering. I miss going out on a whim to our pokey cinema with friends, sharing one experience and disputing the interpretations later.

So myself and my partner went to the Projectile Festival in May, up in Newcastle. The Star and Shadow autonomous cinema really blew me away. I'm kind of used to the emergent UK social centre model now, but this was one up and beyond: Geordie bunting, a Hawaiian mural, proper banked seating, huge. I was galvanised by the collective's commitment to regular film showings and their choice to focus on that as means to promote our campaigns and beliefs publicly.

Returning home, I was told by a Glaswegian that the Star and Shadow have a DVD library, and they'd just borrowed the entire Projectile programme list. Then I remembered a local political-historical video lending service I'd never called upon, and discovered that the Women's Environmental Network also has a collection of DVDs for rent.

It suddenly seemed really easy to just book a load of dates at a venue and put together a programme of films. The anarchist group owns a projector for such purposes but hasn't been very active in publicising its availability. Apparently it took dire necessity striking for our community to take the reins of the urgent DIY option.

We had our first showing last week, on Wednesday evening, in our CAB meeting room. The film advertised was *Salud Y Solidaridad* (Health and Solidarity) produced by Camcorder Guerillas. A half-hour documentary about the connection between 16th February, a



Zapatista-supporting municipality in the Highlands of Chiapas, Mexico and the Edinburgh Chiapas Solidarity group. It was made from footage taken during the construction of an independent health clinic financed by the Scottish group, in order to raise more money to send medical supplies and equipment over there for the community's use.

Narrated slowly and simply – some said the information was actually a bit skimpy – the film had an almost dreamy quality, full of the vibrant colours and patterns of the indigenous Tzotzil peoples' lives and traditions. There were lots of stills used on screen, contributing to an unhurried pace, and many panoramic shots of the mountains where the inhabitants grow coffee and maize, under piercingly blue sky. I suppose as one of the services EdinChiapas provides is advice on travelling out to volunteer with the Zapatistas it shouldn't be a surprise for the camera to linger over spectacular scenery!

None of the violent state repression of the indigenous struggle for autonomy is depicted and I got mildly worried that people with no knowledge of recent Mexican events may misconstrue a rather idyllic Zapatista lifestyle as a consequence. The focus is wholly on the community's effort to build up their infra-

structure to become self sustaining – especially important with regard to health as many hospitals rural inhabitants travel miles to get treatment at refuse them services for supporting the Zapatista movement.

This was a major reason we picked out the film – it illustrates what workers can do for themselves in situations where they have limited resources and many enemies.

Everything was cooperated in the municipality. A textile co-op embroiders blouses and weaves brightly dyed yarn, the Mut Vitz coffee co-op produces the infamous Café Rebelde, the coffee of choice for the discerning revolutionary, while another mines amber to turn into jewellery – all this is marketed through us here in Europe because they have few outlets otherwise. So demonstrating practical acts of solidarity do make a difference.

An element I was personally impressed with was the image of the municipality's women in balaclavas used for the explanation of why such disguise is necessary: to protect identities from government militia. It contravenes the stereotype of the male warrior and shows women's role in the Zapatista political uprising – not a new thing but I think important to see reaffirmed throughout our own media.





## Review

### « page 15

As with many activist-made films it ends on a 'what can you do' list, mainly revolving around money and raising awareness of the campaign.

Responses from attendees were positive. We had a discussion over ... yes, you guessed it, freshly brewed Café Rebelde, which became nicely informal and because we had the venue all night it was decided to watch a second film! The best thing about the DVD is it contains folders full of articles, leaflets, images, and other films, which makes it valuable campaign material. We put on an hour-long documentary integrating the Chiapan fight for autonomy into a wider context of Central American grassroots struggle against the free market and US imperialism. It had become a hardcore eye-straining film club by this point, and we

were all startled to see hand puppets act out the mechanism by which multinational corporations and state sponsored institutions ruin the lives of campesinos and force them off their lands and into virtual labour camps in the urban factories. I think the puppetry was excellent and should be used in schools! Characters: water, corn, campesino, Monsanto and Coca Cola... Anyway real people on screen also talked in detail about Plan Pueblo-Panama and NAFTA, and delivered a well-structured crash course in economics and the World Bank/IMT. The two films complemented one another stylistically and in content.

People were enthusiastic about coming in future and congratulated the organisation of the film showing. One guy is a lecturer in Politics and Sociology who said he'd spread the word at Suffolk College – how strategic to get his support! And he came from Newcastle and knew the Star and Shadow

since before it was housed permanently, thus closing the small-world circle for the night. Roll Up, Roll Up!

## THE QUIZ

1. Who is the odd one out from Robert Mugabe, Benito Mussolini, Nicolae Ceaucescu and Ronald Reagan? And why?
2. Which western European country was without a government for more than half of 2007?
3. According to an unpublished report from the World Bank, what is the biggest factor causing food prices to rise?
4. What football tournament was won in 2006 by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, beating Zanzibar on penalties in the final?

Answers on page 14

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# to anarchism through a more spir



and in favour of co-operative action; what Kropotkin two-and-a-half centuries later called 'mutual aid'.

Potentially, the energy I write of, and its spiritual core can help to resolve conflicts by goodwill arising from strength of spirit. The opposite of this is seen in the vicious circle of despair fuelling terrorism, provoking counter military responses. James Redfield's *The Celestine Prophecy* points to this energy, suggesting how it can be used for political challenges; outside the context of conventional religion but his other work

drifted into deep mysticism.<sup>7</sup>

For thousands of years, there has been opposition to the state and its agents, by people who included a spiritual dimension in their resistance to authority: to the above list we can add Lao Tzu, in ancient China, the Cathars in the medieval Basque country. They all made mistakes but are we looking for perfect blueprints?

The early work of Ghandi and Martin Luther King also trod that road, even if they were posthumously co-opted as stateist icons. Conflicts and contradictions will be noted in

the histories of those mentioned above – we are all fallible but able to work at times with a degree of compromise.

Parallel with the development of radical 1960s and '70s politics, the 'New Age' movement shed as much light as murk. From the Atlantis industry, to the blind alley of drug induced hedonism, the search for unadorned spirituality continued to be frustrated. But some, from various religions, looking for non-authoritarian politics were drawn to anarchism, while some convinced anarchists began to look at spiritual ideas.